

Fightback

August 2013

Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism



Racist "Pakeha Party" Ignores History

Government expanding
surveillance powers

Government shifts
responsibility for
enforcing welfare reforms

Millennial generation:
Casualisation and resistance

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E d i t o r i a l

Welcome to the August issue of Fightback (Aotearoa/NZ). Fightback is a revolutionary socialist group with branches in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch.

Racism sparked key debates and struggles throughout July. In Aotearoa/NZ, the rising popularity of a page entitled 'The Pakeha Party,' a backlash against the politics of Māori sovereignty, sparked controversy. Fightback supporter Thomas Roud, also involved in Christchurch group Anti-Racist Action, argues both that The Pakeha Party's blindness to history is racist, and that progressives can't afford to ignore this Pakeha backlash.

In the USA, the belly of the beast, vigilante George Zimmerman was acquitted for murdering young black boy Trayvon Martin. This sparked protests across the country, including an occupation of the Capitol in Florida. In an article reprinted from Socialist Worker

(USA), Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor gives the "verdict on American racism."

The international growth of state surveillance is also a concern for socialists and other progressives. Fightback supporter Ciaran Doolin covers the link between state surveillance and imperialist violence under Obama, (p10-12) while Byron Clark covers both the case of NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden (p12-13) and the Government Communications Secrecy Bureau (GCSB) bill which gives the government greater surveillance rights in Aotearoa/NZ.

Finally, Polly Peek covers the shifting of responsibility for welfare onto private providers, (p16-18) and Ian Anderson responds to criticisms of the 'millennial generation.'

In Brief

Pacific nuclear testing fallout worse than previously admitted

Two thousand previously classified documents relating to nuclear testing in French Polynesia have been released following court action in France. The documents confirm that fallout from atmospheric tests that took place between 1966 and 1974 affected all islands and not only the 21 atolls listed by the defence ministry three years ago.

According to Roland Oldham, head of Moruroa e tatou, an association of nuclear test veterans founded in 2001, a total of twenty six vessels were also contaminated, as was Tahiti.

"There is one document that says in Tahiti, the fallout of plutonium is 500 times higher than the maximum dose that human beings can have. This is a big worry for us."

Cleaners march against law change

A group of about 50 cleaners, mostly members of the Service and Food Workers Union, protested outside parliament on July 24th. Their concern was a clause in Employment Relations Act that protects low-paid workers when their jobs are restructured, which is set to be removed with the passage of the Employment Relations Amendment bill. "Some of the cleaners here are working two, three jobs" said Wellington cleaner Lalopua Sanele "all these people will suffer." Protesters delivered 2000 submissions against the proposed change. For more on the Employment Relations Amendment bill see page XX

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Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism

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Racism

Racist “Pakeha Party” Ignores History

by Thomas Roud, *Fightback and Anti-Racist Action* (Christchurch).

A Facebook page for “The Pakeha Party” caused a stir in early July, quickly gaining more ‘likes’ than any other political party in New Zealand. While the founder, David Ruck, admitted that the idea was initially a joke between friends, the torrent of interest has resulted in an attempt to build a real political party based on rhetoric of ‘equal rights’ for all New Zealanders. The Pakeha Party illustrates the profound ignorance of history within our society, as well as an underbelly of racism which have both been emerging more frequently during the economic recession. While many have, quite rightly, pointed out that David Ruck is a complete buffoon, the popularity of his bigoted ‘joke’ highlights a dangerous ideological tendency.

Historical Illiteracy

Reading comments in the media, and made by Ruck via the Facebook page, it is clear that supporters of the message of ‘equal rights’ completely misunderstand a great deal of New Zealand’s colonial history, and race relations. The myth of a privileged Māori beneficiary living off the hard work of others is commonplace not just within misinformed racist circles, but has representation in mainstream media. The disgusting cartoon by Al Nisbet earlier this year is a clear example of mainstream attacks on Māori living in poverty – and a perpetuation of the myths around beneficiaries in general.

More disturbing are the many calls from white New Zealanders to discard the Treaty of Waitangi and ‘let bygones be bygones’. This is perhaps one of the most fundamental misunderstandings, reinforced by a kind of abstracted lib-

eralism based around ‘individual’ rights and responsibilities. The argument is familiar enough: that “Pākehā now should not be paying for the crimes of our ancestors”. The separation of who is ‘guilty’ for particular wrongs in the past from any repercussions over time must be challenged. What supporters of Ruck’s message ignore are the ways that violations of the Treaty (illegal land seizure etc.) by The Crown have created a fundamentally unequal society. All workers are dispossessed, but indigenous people experience dispossession in the extreme within colonial societies. Ancestral land which sustained families for generations were enclosed, carved up, and sold – often illegally or in a fraudulent manner. Naturally, this forced Māori into poverty in rural communities while the collective wealth of the nation circulated through predominantly white hands. Revenue from these injustices, and the labour of the working class, built New Zealand largely in the image of Europe. Institutions with European ‘sensibilities’ were seen as normal and Māori struggling to integrate into these systems were punished.

In the mid 20th century a migration from rural communities by Māori into urban centres took place. Māori were slotted in always at the lowest rung of the working class within urban environments. Māori integrated, often discouraging children to learn their own language so as to better fit in within the white, European-centered schooling system. Māori were being incorporated into European society, but effectively as an underclass. Urbanization largely destroyed widespread understanding of Kaupapa, and over the following decades Te Reo was in serious jeopardy of becoming extinct. This loss of cultural identity is still being grappled with today. The Pakeha Party are likely informed by the generation of white

New Zealand who remember this era as the “good old days” when race and The Treaty were ignored. As Morgan Godfrey pointed out recently, New Zealand’s egalitarian myth does allow Māori (and everyone else) to participate, so long as they assimilate. “There’s no room for Māori participating as Māori.”. The message of ‘equal rights’ from The Pakeha Party would effectively see a reverse of Māori initiatives which attempt to allow Māori full participation in society as Māori.

Those who find Ruck’s message resonating with them seem to misunderstand that the crimes and injustices of the past have created and reinforced the inequity of the present. Māori are over represented in prisons, have poorer health outcomes and die younger, are in more dangerous and lower paid jobs; all related to systemic poverty and institutionalized racism that has built up over decades. Treaty settlements and Māori specific social development schemes are trying to correct very real wrongs that not only disenfranchised Māori, but inversely allowed for the over-privilege of Pākehā in New Zealand. What Malcolm X said of America rings no less true with the meagre Treaty reparations being made now for past crimes:

“If you stick a knife nine inches into my back and pull it out three inches, that is not progress. Even if you pull it all the way out, that is not progress. Progress is healing the wound, and America hasn’t even begun to pull out the knife.”

Reparations, progress; these ideas are ongoing. Even in supposedly progressive journalism around the Pakeha Party it is often pointed out that the Waitangi Tribunal is two years off finishing up all settlement claims, as though in two years New Zealand will finally have



racial harmony once more. The harm done in the past has shaped the present and will continue to shape the future regardless of Treaty settlement processes. The ongoing struggle with racial oppression cannot be overcome under capitalism, but cannot be reduced simply to questions of class.

Misdirected Class Rhetoric

A legitimate concern socialists in New Zealand should have about the Pakeha Party page is that the rhetoric used appeals to class divisions to describe oppression and poverty. While much of the statements around this are basically incoherent, the message of “it’s about class, not race” is one all too familiar in

some of the socialist tradition in the 20th Century.

This call to ignore structural racism is not revolutionary, and it does not foster class solidarity so much as separatism and hostility. Pākehā are afforded many privileges in our society; better health outcomes, better employment opportunities, lower incarceration rates, more access to property. However, by clinging to these meagre privileges, Pākehā workers ultimately obstruct their own liberation. Solidarity is necessary to fighting for a socialist society, one with an equitable division of labour and resources; racism corrodes solidarity.

Acknowledging different forms of oppression, and working to correct power imbalances, is essential in building a

progressive movement. Within the framework of society as it exists currently, this means fighting for more wide reaching affirmative action and reconciliation.

The ultimate failure of the Pakeha Party is its misdirected blame of the plight of white working class New Zealanders on the shoulders of Māori. Poverty, underemployment, unemployment, and exploitation are absolutely essential for the capitalist system to operate. Tino Rangatiratanga is not hurting the working class, because its expression is in fact a challenge to hegemonic neoliberal capitalism. The Pakeha Party believes that Māori specific programs, be they housing or welfare etc, come at the cost of programs aimed at all people. This

Racism

ignores the fact that all social welfare programs have been won through struggle. A call for getting rid of Whānau Ora, for example, would not result in more funds being directed to other programs – merely a reduction of total spending by the Government to assist the least well off.

Ruck's ultimate demonstration of completely misrepresenting class struggle is exposed by his breaking of a picket line recently at a McDonalds, part of UNITE's McStrike campaign. He is unhappy with being confronted, and claims that if people do not want to work for McDonald's they should "get a different job".

While the Pakeha Party is not comparable to far right groups, such as the EDL in Britain, Golden Dawn in Greece,

or even our own "Resistance Party" headed by Kyle Chapman, this does not mean they are harmless. The Pakeha Party has indeed resonated with a lot of New Zealanders – many of whom are likely looking for answers as to why our national myths no longer seem to be true. Like the myth of the American Dream in the USA, slipping away from generation to generation, our own myth of egalitarianism is largely under pressure as inequality skyrockets and wages continue to stagnate for the working class. People are looking for someone to blame, and the misdirected antagonism towards Māori does nothing to address the true cause of our current situation.

Recently, David Ruck's incompetence lost the page 700 followers when he posted drunk. Some on the left have suggested that if the Pakeha Party

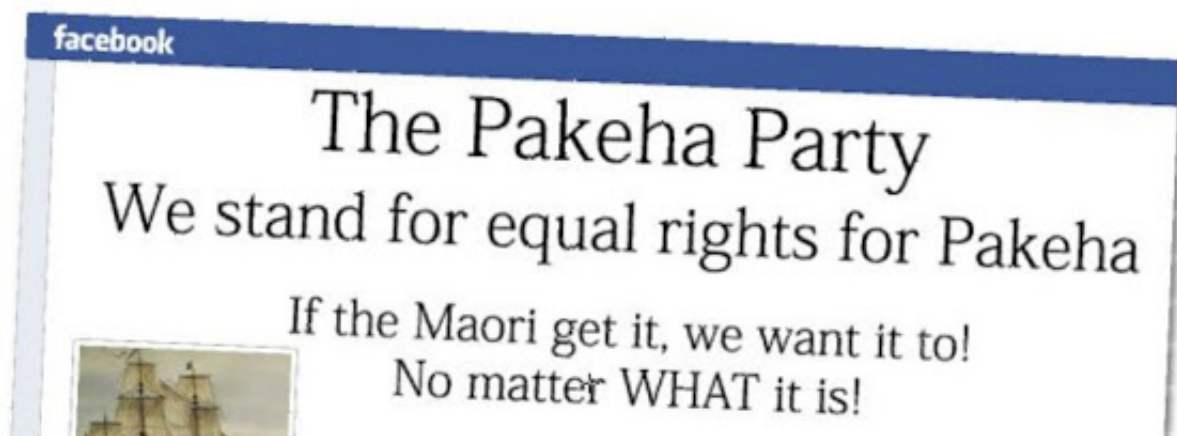
registers, it will split votes from ACT/ National and NZ First. This is a miscalculation. Even if the Pakeha Party itself is a flash in the pan, the popularity of the Pakeha Party message indicates a serious miseducation within New Zealand about our own history and our race relations. The ruling class gains the ultimate benefit from Pākehā racism.

See also

Racism in Aotearoa/NZ, Byron Clark
<http://fightback.org.nz/2013/04/13/racism-in-aotearoanz/>


Racism and recession in Aotearoa/NZ, Jared Phillips
<http://fightback.org.nz/2013/05/25/racism-and-recession-in-aotearoanz/>

The Treaty, The Foreshore and Seabed and Tino Rangatiratanga, Mike K
<http://fightback.org.nz/2012/02/05/the-treaty-the-foreshore-seabed-and-tino-rangatiratanga/>



- Maori children are 23 times more likely than European children to suffer rheumatic fever
- Maori have 50% higher rate of mental illness than non-Maori
- Maori life expectancy is 8 years lower than European life expectancy
- One in four Maori males have spent some time in prison
- One in four Maori young people are unemployed
- Maori students make up disproportionate share of the children left behind by our education system

Source: www.closetogether.org.nz



Zimmerman acquittal: The verdict on American racism

On February the 6th, 2012, vigilante George Zimmerman killed African American teenager Trayvon Martin. It took 44 days and mass protests to initiate prosecution against Zimmerman. On the 15th of July 2013, George Zimmerman was acquitted. In a piece reprinted from Socialist Worker, (US) Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor analyses the racism underlying the killing and the verdict.

Shock, horror and then rage. These were the feelings experienced by tens of thousands of people across the country as they struggled to comprehend the meaning of George Zimmerman's acquittal. How could Zimmerman be free? It was he who stalked Trayvon Martin, confronted him, pulled out a gun and ultimately murdered the unarmed teenage boy.

Before the verdict was even determined, the mainstream media did its best to both whip up hysteria about the potential for riots in the event of a not-guilty verdict, while simultaneously broadcasting appeals to "respect" the system and whatever outcome was announced. These media-generated appeals helped to provide law enforcement with a cover to harass and intimidate protesters—and they once again shifted the blame for racially inspired violence onto the victims and away from the perpetrators.

The media might have instead performed a public service to publicize the new warning that has issued forth as a result of the outcome of this trial: It is open season on young Black men.

Trayvon Martin was killed in Febru-

ary 2012 because George Zimmerman decided he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Instead of Zimmerman being held accountable for his deadly act of racial profiling, Martin, his family and friends were put on trial, first in the media and then in the courtroom—and they were ultimately found guilty of being Black in a country where Black lives get next-to-no value nor respect.

The facts surrounding this case, from its beginning to its shocking end, show the depth of racism in the United States—and yes, that's a United States presided over by an African American president.

It took more than six weeks for George Zimmerman to even be arrested and charged with any crime, despite the fact that he had murdered an unarmed

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teenager who was doing nothing more than carrying Skittles and iced tea back from a convenience store.

The police immediately and instinctively accepted Zimmerman's version of events—that he acted in self-defense. His arrest only came after weeks of protests that brought thousands of ordinary people into the streets to demand justice. The outcry was so widespread that even President Barack Obama was compelled to make a sympathetic public statement about Martin.

The Zimmerman trial was supposed to show that the system could work in achieving justice for African Americans. Instead, lazy prosecutors—who are used to railroading boys like Trayvon—proved not to have the same vigor in prosecuting someone like Zimmerman. Meanwhile, Zimmerman's attorneys methodically employed every racist stereotype about young Black men they could conjure up.

By the end of the trial, someone who didn't know the facts of the case might have guessed that Martin profiled, chased and killed Zimmerman—not the other way around.

There are those who insist the outcome of the Zimmerman trial isn't about race, but the intricacies of the law—about what's permissible in court and other legal mumbo jumbo. But the Trayvon Martin case has proved once again how racism is woven into every aspect of the justice system, including the courtroom.

If anyone doubts the answer to the often-asked hypothetical question—what would the outcome have been if Martin was white and his killer African American—consider the case of Marissa Alexander.

Alexander is an African American resident of Jacksonville, Fla., who was put on trial in Florida—by the very same state attorney in charge of Zimmerman's prosecution, in fact—for aggravated assault because she fired a warning

shot into a wall in order to scare off an abusive husband. Alexander even used the same Florida “Stand Your Ground” defense that allows someone fearing for their life or safety to use a weapon in self-defense.

So what happened? Zimmerman was acquitted of any responsibility in the death of Trayvon Martin. Alexander, who was accused of firing a single warning shot that didn't cause the least harm to anyone, was found guilty by a jury that deliberated just 12 minutes, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Justice in Florida is never color-blind.

The outcome of the Zimmerman case, however, isn't only about prosecutors, defense attorneys and courtroom strategy either. It's about how the demonization of African Americans—and in particular, young African American men—has become so widely accepted and normalized that a teenager can be hunted down and murdered because he is Black, and no one is punished.

The insistence that race is only an issue in U.S. social and political life when race is mentioned isn't just the erroneous belief of the misinformed Florida judge who presided in the Zimmerman case and banned the discussion of race from the trial.

It is now widely accepted throughout the U.S. that the absence of racial language means the absence of race or racism. This was recently confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court when it struck down significant sections of the Voting Rights Act—one of the central achievements of the civil rights movement—because, as Chief Justice John Roberts put it, “our country has changed.” While Roberts conceded there were still some instances of racial discrimination, the thrust of the court's ruling was to claim that the country had moved past the era of systematic discrimination.

This was the claim made by the professional media in 2008 as well, as they

celebrated the election of the country's first Black president, Barack Obama. Commentators repeatedly suggested Obama's election meant the U.S. was entering a “post-racial” era.

Obama and a handful of other economically and politically successful Black individuals are often held up as a vindication of American democracy. In his last run for president, Obama was fond of saying, “My story is only possible here in America—the belief that here in America, if you try, you can make it.”

This narrative about the American Dream and the wonders of U.S. democracy isn't some folksy tale about self-empowerment and the rise of a Black president. It's a legend designed to redirect attention from structural inequality, racism, imperialism, genocide and all of the other ingredients that constitute the real story of America. Obama is held up as a prime example of how it's possible to advance under American democracy—and those who fail to rise and become successful are therefore told it's their own fault.

The Zimmerman trial confirmed this when Trayvon Martin was systematically blamed for his own death. That ugly scapegoating is connected to the way African Americans are regularly blamed for all sorts of things—their unemployment, or disproportionate levels of poverty, or higher levels of imprisonment, or harassment at the hands of police, or higher levels of foreclosures and evictions, or the mass closures of the schools they send their children to. It's always the individual's fault—and never the system that creates and perpetuates inequality.

Black people—along with other groups suffering systematic discrimination—are encouraged to buy into a story that blames them for their own oppression.

But every once in a while, something happens that tears the mask off, revealing the ugly face of U.S. society. The

murder of Trayvon Martin and now the acquittal of his murderer confirms again that racism is so tightly packed into the blood and marrow of American democracy that it cannot live without it.

Barack Obama defended the racist verdict by saying the USA is a “nation of laws.”

One of the jobs of those who would like to see some measure of justice for Trayvon Martin and all the other victims of discrimination in this society is to bring the word “racism” back into the nation’s political lexicon. This is the only way to make sense of the unequal conditions that most African Americans and other minorities live under.

Racial discrimination—and the consequence that greater numbers of African Americans endure poverty, unemployment, poorly funded schools, housing insecurity and the rest—is not, in most cases, caused intentionally, as it once was.

Today, inequality is the outcome of centuries of racial oppression and economic exploitation. This is a country built on the enslavement of people with Black skin and then, at slavery’s end, the imposition of 100 years of legal discrimination against African Americans. So no one can simply decide, some 40 years after the last explicitly racist law was taken off the books, that racism is no longer an issue in American life.

But the perpetuation of the myth that we are living in a post-racial era isn’t a mistake. It’s a deliberate attempt to direct anger away from systemic causes, and onto the victims.

Thus, when President Obama released a statement in response to Zimmerman’s acquittal, he didn’t mention racism, racial profiling or even injustice. Along with the standard platitudes that “we are a nation of laws”—effectively, a call to respect the decision of the jury—Obama cited “gun violence” in our “communities” as the real issue—as if “gun violence”

has anything to do with Zimmerman’s racially fueled vigilante justice.

Then again, Obama—at least since becoming a national political leader—has always avoided any opportunity to speak out about the persistence of racism and inequality in the U.S.

That job, in fact, has always been the task of activists, radicals and socialists.

Next month will mark the 50th anniversary of the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,” where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

The murder of Trayvon Martin suggests that while many things have changed since that historic march, many things have not. The lives of Black men, women and children were cheap in the Jim Crow South, and civil rights activists often looked to officials in Washington, D.C., to step in and prosecute cases that local redneck officials wouldn’t. Today, we make the same call for the federal government to do what local and state officials in Seminole County, Fl., wouldn’t and couldn’t.

The fight for justice for Trayvon Martin doesn’t hinge solely on getting a coveted “guilty” verdict against George Zimmerman. It must be about vindicating his humanity and dignity—that he did not die in vain. We should support calls for federal prosecution of Zimmerman on the grounds that he violated Martin’s civil rights. But we must also heed the words of Martin Luther King in 1963, when he called on the nation to act for a broader understanding of justice:

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God’s children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.



A protest held in Sanford, Florida in the aftermath of the verdict.

A close-up, high-contrast portrait of Barack Obama, looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The image is the background for the top half of the page.

Obama: Surveillance, Secrecy and State Terror

By Ciaran Doolin

Obama came to power in 2009 after a campaign replete with pledges to return the US to being a nation that respected the civil liberties of its citizens and the human rights of its enemies. Those who assessed Obama's rhetoric as simply vacuous politicking have since been vindicated. Obama has dramatically expanded the Bush-era surveillance state (discussed in *Prism*, *Tempora* and *the Case of Edward Snowden*), aggressively defended government secrecy and prosecuted the War on Terror with elevated levels of ruthlessness.

Mass surveillance under Bush

The expansion of the state intelligence apparatus in the United States began

rapidly after the attack on September 11 in 2001. The USA PATRIOT Act 2001 gave the President of the United States unprecedented power to impinge on the rights of both foreign and US citizens. Among many other draconian measures, the decision to use torture, referred to euphemistically by the Bush administration as "enhanced interrogation techniques", was justified under the Patriot Act. In 2005 the *New York Times* published a series of stories detailing extensive surveillance of people within the US by the National Security Agency (NSA) that lacked Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act (FISA) court warrants. In 2007, under pressure from Congress, the public and the media, Bush returned the programme to the scrutiny of the FISA court, although in August of that year the Protect America Act (PAA) was passed which amended

FISA removing warrant requirements for foreign targets "reasonably believed" to be outside the US. These amendments were reaffirmed the following year. The amendment acts also immunised private organisations from prosecution for cooperating with the US government's surveillance programs.

Obama escalates surveillance

The amendments to FISA opened the door for a next generation surveillance program – PRISM. The extent of the program was revealed last month by *The Guardian* who received extensive classified documentation from former NSA contractor Edward Snowden. The disclosures show that the NSA can unilaterally undertake "extensive, in-depth surveillance on live communications

and stored information” including email, video and voice chat, videos, photos, voice-over-IP chats (such as Skype), file transfers, and social networking details. According to *The Washington Post*, NSA analysts search PRISM data using terms intended to identify suspicious communications by targets whom the analysts are at least 51% sure are not U.S. citizens. Such a low level of surety means that “unintentional” surveillance of US citizens has been extensive. In an interview Snowden summarized the scope of the disclosures, reporting that “in general, the reality is this: if an NSA, FBI, CIA, DIA, etc analyst has access to query raw SIGINT [signals intelligence] databases, they can enter and get results for anything they want.” Alongside PRISM is BLARNEY, a programme which gathers much of the metadata of internet streams for analysis. Metadata includes information about the time, author and IP address of created data.

Obama and the War on Terror

The Obama administration has sharply escalated the drone attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. According to *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, in Pakistan – the primary battleground for drones – there have been 319 strikes under Obama as compared with Bush’s 52. Since 2004 in Pakistan alone, there have been as many 3,500 (reported) deaths and 1,500 injuries. Among these deaths are an estimated 900 civilians. Justified under the 2001 Authorisation of the Use of Military Force (AUMF), the drone attacks have long been viewed as violations of international law. In a brazen abrogation of the constitutional right to due process, Obama ordered the “targeted killing” of senior al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki, a US citizen based in Yemen. Two weeks later his 16-year-old son Abdulrahman, also a US citizen, who had no connection to al-Qaeda, was killed in another drone

strike which US officials claim was targeting someone else. When reporters questioned Obama’s then Press Secretary Robert Gibbs he responded that the boy “should [have] had a more responsible father.” According to a lengthy *New York Times* article Obama has a “kill list” of terrorists which he personally approves. When faced with the decision to extra-judicially execute US citizens Obama reportedly meditated on Thomas Aquinas’ and St. Augustine’s Just War theories, although perhaps not for very long as he described the ultimate decision as “an easy one”. The article also revealed that the official method for accounting for civilian casualties of drone strikes is deliberately skewed: “It in effect counts all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants...unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent.”

According to *The Washington Post* report the Obama administration is developing a next generation system to take the place of the current “kill list” called the “Disposition Matrix”. The Disposition Matrix database catalogues biographies, locations, associates, and affiliations of suspects. It also catalogues strategies for finding, capturing, or killing suspects, or subjecting them to extraordinary rendition. Civil liberties analyst Glenn Greenwald writes of the “Disposition Matrix”:

[T]he NCTC [National Counterterrorism Center] operates a gigantic data-mining operation, in which all sorts of information about innocent Americans is systematically monitored, stored, and analyzed.... It is simultaneously a surveillance state and a secretive, unaccountable judicial body that analyzes who you are and then decrees what should be done with you, how you should be ‘disposed’ of, beyond the reach of any minimal accountability or transparency.

After his election in 2009, Obama issued executive orders requiring an immediate review of every Guantanamo Bay prisoner’s case. He also declared that the camp would be closed within one year. Defense Secretary Robert Gates followed suit a short time later with a formal directive barring new military commission proceedings against all but a half-dozen of Guantanamo’s prisoners. However in May 2011 that ban was lifted, paving the way for military prosecutors to proceed with cases against dozens of other Guantanamo detainees. Obama’s failure has been made all the more conspicuous in recent months with 102 of the 166 inmates on hunger strike in protest at their continuing detention without trial. Of those 102 prisoners, 45 have been subject to forced feeding, a practice described by the UN Human Rights Commission as tantamount to torture. As many lawyers have argued, the reason the Obama administration has refused to try prisoners in a civilian court is that many of the cases are too weak to meet the minimum burden of proof required for a conviction.

Obama attacks civil liberties

There have been a number of significant Supreme Court cases under Obama in the fight to protect civil liberties. Among the many sections of the PATRIOT Act which were criticised either on principle or for offering too much decision-making scope to the executive, was the section prohibiting the provision of material support to designated terrorist groups. Humanitarian Law Project, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflict through the use of humanitarian and international law, proposed to assist the Kurdistan Worker’s Party in Turkey and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka to sue for peace. In 2010 the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of the government in *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project*

Surveillance

concluding that the proposed assistance did fit the definition of material aid. The decision received widespread criticism, in particular, from former President Jimmy Carter:

The 'material support law' – which is aimed at putting an end to terrorism – actually threatens our work and the work of many other peacemaking organizations that must interact directly with groups that have engaged in violence. The vague language of the law leaves us wondering if we will be prosecuted for our work to promote peace and freedom.

A related piece of legislation, the 2012 National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA), which authorises the indefinite detention of a person who is a “part of or substantially supported al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners”, is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court by a group including former *New York Times* Reporter Chris Hedges. The plaintiffs in *Hedges v. Obama* argue that the ambiguous wording is such that journalists or activists who interview members of “al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated groups” could be covered under the NDAA and be held indefinitely. Furthermore they argue that the fear of being held subject to the NDAA is acting as an effective restriction on freedom of speech.

Secrecy and whistle-blowers

These cases are representative of a general trend, initiated by Bush and dramatically escalated by Obama, of attacking civil liberties alongside fiercely guarding government secrecy. Obama has prosecuted twice the number of whistle-blowers under the 1917 Espionage Act than all previous administrations (including Bush's) combined.

As if that were not enough, Obama has aggressively targeted a number of journalists responsible for publishing leaks. In 2011 *New York Times* journalist James Risen was subpoenaed by the Obama administration to testify for the prosecution in the case of CIA whistle-blower Jeffrey Sterling whom the Department of Justice (DoJ) accused of leaking (to Risen) details of a severely botched CIA infiltration of Iran's nuclear program, a story which Risen wrote about six years *ex post facto*. While the original subpoena was issued by Bush, it was later abandoned. The re-issuing of the subpoena was a “rare step” according to the *New York Times*. The DoJ is essentially trying to force Risen to testify that Sterling was his source, in clear violation of reporter's privilege.

In May *Associated Press* (AP) reported that the DoJ had seized telephone records for 20 of their reporters during a two-month period in 2012. The seizure related to a criminal investigation into a story published by AP in May 2012. The AP chose to sit on a story about a foiled Yemen-based terrorist plot for 5 days due to national security concerns expressed by the Obama administration. In the end they decided to publish the day before Obama was set to announce the success of the operation. Although this was a relatively minor act of disobedience, which did little more than deny Obama the exclusive attention of the media, the administration thought itself justified to carry out a vicious attack on the rights of journalists.

In perhaps the most ominous (and unprecedented) step the Obama administration has also been trying to prosecute journalists for working with sources to obtain classified information –something that investigative journalists do routinely. In May *The Washington Post* reported that Fox News reporter James Rosen had his phone and emails monitored by the DoJ in an attempt to locate a leak within the department. To obtain the necessary warrants, which were per-

sonally signed off by Attorney General Eric Holder, the DoJ referred to him in court as a “criminal co-conspirator” with Stephen Jin-Woo Kim (Rosen's source who disclosed that North Korea might test a nuclear bomb).

The whistle-blower Bradley (or Breanna) Manning, who was responsible for leaking a panoply of classified documents to Wikileaks in 2010 (now known as the Afghan-Iraq war logs) that demonstrated systemic abuses of human rights by US forces, is now facing charges which could lead to 22 years in prison. For nine months in 2010/2011 Manning was held in solitary confinement in a windowless cell for 23 hours a day, which a UN Special Rapporteur on Torture described as “cruel, inhuman and degrading.” The Obama administration has clearly decided that the trade-off of bad publicity is worth it to demonstrate to potential whistle-blowers the future which awaits them if they are caught.

The road ahead

In a Senate Armed Services Committee meeting in May, during which the statutory basis for the AUMF was discussed, Assistant Secretary of Defence for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, Michael Sheehan, testified that the War on Terror would continue for “[a]t least [another] 10 to 20 years”. With major combat operations in Afghanistan coming to an end in 2014, the drone war can only be expected to intensify. To contain a home population which is tired of war and becoming increasingly restless intelligence gathering programmes and the aggressive protection of government secrecy will surely follow the same route. As ever, Orwell's prescience is instructive: “The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous... The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory... but to keep the very structure of society intact.”



PRISM, Tempora and the case of Edward Snowden

Image of Edward Snowden at a protest in support of him

by Byron Clark, *Fightback* (Christchurch).

The past few years have seen the US led “war on terror” morph from a bloody ground war in Iraq and Afghanistan to something resembling a Hollywood techno-thriller. Three years after soldier Bradley Manning was arrested for leaking an enormous trove of classified documents via Wikileaks, another whistle-blower has revealed that American and British intelligence agencies have been engaged in large scale surveillance programmes.

Edward Snowden was a technical contractor for the American National Security Administration (NSA) before he felt he could not continue the work

he was doing in good conscience. After taking leave from his employment and flying for Hawai’i to Hong Kong, he revealed details of the PRISM and Tempora programmes “to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them.” The leaked information was published by The Guardian and the Washington Post.

The NSA programme PRISM began in 2007 with the passing of the Protect America Act, which removed the requirement for a warrant when collecting data on foreign intelligence targets “reasonably believed” to be outside of the United States, and made it legal to collect data on American citizens communicating with people outside the US

who were under investigation.

The operation collected metadata, meaning data such as the time an email was sent, who it was to and from, as well as the file size of the email, but not the actual contents of the message. This data was collected from a number of different communications technologies facilitated by internet services that are household names, such as Google, Facebook and Skype, although these companies were not knowingly complicit in the programme.

Snowden has described aspects of the data collection as “dangerous” and “criminal” under US law, but has also pointed out that focusing on the illegal surveillance of Americans is “a distraction from the power and danger of this

Surveillance

system.” Adding that “Suspicionless surveillance does not become okay simply because it’s only victimizing 95% of the world instead of 100%.”

A similar programme in the UK, Tempora, has been in operating since 2011 and shared information with the NSA. The data collected by Tempora is of a much greater scope than the data collected by PRISM, it includes recordings of telephone calls, the content of email messages, Facebook entries and the peoples personal internet use history. Tempora was orchestrated by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) who Snowden has described as “worse than the US”. “Tempora is the first ‘I save everything’ approach (‘full take’) in the intelligence world. It sucks in all data, no matter what it is, and which rights are violated by it”

While PRISM surveillance required the already loose criteria of suspicion, Tempora made no distinction between innocent people or targeted suspects when gathering data. CGHQ lawyers said it would be impossible to list the total number of people targeted because “this would be an infinite list which we couldn’t manage”.

While any data passing through the UK or US (which most internet commu-

nications do) could have been spied on, regardless of what country it originated from, the intelligence agencies in Canada, Australia and New Zealand- via the Government Security Communications Bureau (GCSB) facility at Waihopai near Blenheim - have been sharing information with the NSA. This revelation has fuelled opposition to a bill currently going through parliament that would give more powers to the GCSB.

On June 14, US federal prosecutors filed a sealed complaint, which was made public on June 21, charging Snowden with theft of government property, unauthorized communication of national defence information, and wilful communication of classified intelligence to an unauthorized person; the latter two allegations are under the Espionage Act. Unable to return to the United States Snowden has been offered asylum by a number of South American nations. When the Obama administration threatened to revoke a trade agreement if the country granted Snowden asylum, Ecuador cancelled the pact themselves. In addition the nation’s Communications Secretary, Fernando Alvarado, announced US\$23 million in Ecuadoran aid to the US to provide “human rights training to combat torture, illegal execu-

tions and attacks on people’s privacy.”

Snowden is also popular in his home country- with the people if not with the government- a national poll conducted by Quinnipiac University showed a majority (55%) of those polled supported Snowden as a “whistle blower” versus only 34% who saw him as a “traitor”. On July Fourth, the day the USA celebrates independence, protests against the PRISM program and in support of Snowden took place in major US cities around the theme of “Restore the Fourth” a reference to the fourth amendment to the constitution, which provided protection from unreasonable searches and seizure.

At the time of writing, Snowden has not accepted (at least not publically) an offer of asylum, claiming US officials are waging a campaign to prevent him from doing so. When Snowden was suspected to be on board the presidential jet carrying Bolivian president Evo Morales the plane was grounded in Austria when other European countries refused to allow the plane in their airspace.

“The scale of threatening behaviour is without precedent: never before in history have states conspired to force to the ground a sovereign president’s plane to effect a search for a political refugee.”

Government expanding surveillance powers

by Byron Clark.

The spectacle of Kim Dotcom going face to face with John Key to make a submission on the Government Communications Security Bureau [GCSB] and Related Legislation Amendment Bill received huge media attention, but little has been said on the content of the bill. In part that is because the bill actually contains very little.

In the years following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United

States, New Zealand passed a raft of laws with the supposed goal of combating terrorism. Legislation governing surveillance by the GCSB dates from that era. The present bill will amend the Government Communications Security Bureau Act 2003, removing the word ‘foreign’ from a number of places, and changing the definition of a foreign organization from “an unincorporated body of persons consisting exclusively of foreign organisations or foreign persons that carry on activities wholly outside New Zealand:” to “an unincorporated

body of persons consisting principally of foreign organisations or foreign persons that carry on activities wholly outside New Zealand:”

The purpose of these changes appears to be giving the GCSB powers to spy on New Zealanders previously reserved for spying on foreigners. Typically domestic spying has been the role of the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) or the police, though the GCSB has been involved in spying in 88 cases since 2003.

Other subtle changes are repealing the current definitions of the terms 'computer system' and 'network', replacing them with the catch-all term 'information infrastructure' defined as "electromagnetic emissions, communications systems and networks, information technology systems and networks, and any communications carried on, contained in, or relating to those emissions, systems, or networks". This provides scope for data collection from the wider range of communications devices now available (smartphones for example).

One that remains undefined is the phrase "national security". What all this amounts to is a law that gives the GCSB scope to spy on anyone, inside or outside the country, in a wide range of communications so long as they are seen to pose a risk to the "national security" of New Zealand. Given that the law, even before the current amendment, explicitly introduces the idea of threats to "economic well being" it would be entirely possible to define planning industrial action, such as a strike, as justification for spying.

Its worth noting in this instance that state surveillance of unions is not a hypothetical. Back in 2008 it came to light that Unite was being spied on, not by the GCSB but by the police Special Investigation Group (SIG). In their submission on the amendment bill, the

Council of Trade Unions (CTU) have pointed out that reasons for surveillance such as 'preventing activities aimed at undermining values that underpin New Zealand society' provides a scope "wide enough to capture nearly any activity or discussion with a political motive."

That the bill will erode the right to privacy is almost a given, of greater concern is that there is little recourse when remaining privacy rights are stepped on. When questioned by Radio New Zealand following the revelation of British and American surveillance programmes by whistleblower Edward Snowden, Privacy Commissioner Marie Shroff said the commission does not have specific jurisdiction to monitor the GCSB. At that time she also stated it was not clear how the American programme PRISM might affect New Zealanders. It has since come to light, via Snowdens leaked documents, that the GCSB shared information with the American National Security Agency (NSA).

These concerns were raised not only in submissions made to the select committee, but by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) who employed its rarely used ability to issue a report directly to the Prime Minister. Chief commissioner David Rutherford to The New Zealand Herald "The Commission is concerned that the proposed bills are wide-reaching without sufficient safeguards against

abuse of power. There is inadequate oversight and inadequate provision for ensuring transparency and accountability", John Key was scathing of the commission and erroneously described the report as a submission;

"I think the Human Rights Commission actually should take a step back and ask themselves the question why they failed to put a submission in on time. They are funded by the Government and they were the only people that couldn't actually make the deadline...I actually don't think it was a very good submission at all, and they need to pull their socks up. If they're going to continue to be a government-funded organisation they should meet the deadlines like everyone else did."

Despite Key's dismissal of the HRC, and other dissenting views such as the Law Society, some small changes to the bill have been made to win the necessary vote of Peter Dunne. These changes will require the GCSB to make an annual public declaration about the number of warrants and access authorisations it gets each year, and the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security whenever time it gets permission to spy on a New Zealander. The agency will also need to declare the number of times it helps the Police, the SIS or Defence Force with its specialised interception equipment.



Surveillance/Welfare attacks

Further powers will require an act of parliament, rather than Cabinet just ticking it off via regulation and there will be an independent review of the agency in 2015. Another change was earlier made to secure the vote of John Banks, the requirement for the GCSB to have regard to the Bill of Rights Act, which protects against unreasonable search and surveillance.

These changes however haven't make the bill palatable to advocates for the right to privacy- or even the other parties in parliament, the Green Party called changes "cosmetic" and Labour promised to revisit the legislation governing the GCSB in two years time. The bill will most likely now pass by just one vote.

Who stands to lose from increased GCSB powers? arguably, just about everyone. The British Tempora programme shows that the technology exists to save the entire populations communica-

tions data, and then mine that data for specific keywords. Even without such an eye on peoples information, the knowledge that its legally possible has an effect. As the online civil liberties group Tech Liberty noted in their submission "Knowing that everything is being watched tends to make dissent more timid, limiting our freedom of expression and the effective working of our democracy."

The law will be used against activists, just as the Terrorism Suppression Act was in 2007 when people around the country involved in the Tino Rangatira-tanga movement were arrested by armed police (eventually almost all charges were dropped, with only some unlicensed firearms charges sticking). Part of the reason activists are targeted may be that dissent can indeed be a threat to the political and economic status quo, but another reason is just the fact that actual terrorism is incredibly rare-

there are practically no terrorists for the GCSB to catch.

The New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties put it this way in their submission; "The reality is that all of us will die some time - and almost certainly none by terrorist activity...The focus [of the bill] is on the 1% possibility rather than the 99% probability that no such event will occur."

Despite this reality, where you are more likely to die in your workplace than in a terrorist attack, funding for the GCSB increased by 174% over the last decade, while the SIS had its funding increased by 250% over the same period of time. The state is giving intelligence agencies larger and larger hammers, we shouldn't be surprised if every dissenting political group is starting to look to them like a nail.

Public protests against the bill took place around the country on July 27th.

Government shifts responsibility for enforcing welfare reforms

by Polly Peek, *Fightback* (Christchurch).

Recently released details around how the government plans to see its latest round of welfare reforms carried out, show that the Ministry of Social Development is taking a hands off approach to the implantation of its controversial changes.

The most recent benefit reforms, which came into effect on the 15th of July, make a number of changes to the requirements on people receiving social welfare as well as a complete restructuring of benefit categories, which are now reduced to three benefits: Jobseeker Support, Sole Parent Support and a Supported Living Payment for people living with their own or a dependant's

disability.

People receiving support will now be required to: notify Work and Income if they or their partner plan to leave the country, have their children enrolled with a preschool, school and doctor, undergo pre-employment or pre-training drug testing, clear any outstanding arrest warrants, and reapply for support every year.

Where these new requirements are not met, people will lose their benefit for 13 weeks, or have this halved for the same period if they have dependent children. If someone is considered fit for work and turns down a "suitable" job, they will also face these cuts to their support.

There has been much controversy over this latest round of welfare reforms

throughout the process of the changes being developed and upon their announcement, some of which has been covered in previous *Fightback* articles.

It has only been recently, however, that information has become available around some of the finer details of the legislation, particularly how private employment agencies and beneficiaries themselves will be made responsible for delivering some of the contentious requirements of the reforms.

In keeping with its aim to reduce beneficiary numbers, the Ministry of Social Development has detailed plans to shift people with mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety disorders into work.

While other "jobseekers" will be sup-



ported for as long as it takes to find work by Work and Income case managers, MSD is contracting private services to work on providing wrap-around care and securing employment for people experiencing mild to more intense mental health issues.

The New Zealand Herald, which claims to have obtained leaked MSD documents outlining the plans, reported that “If successful, private providers could earn up to \$12,000 for placing a client considered to have “entrenched” mental health issues in a job where they are working for 30 hours or more a week.”

The payment of set sums of money to these yet to be announced agencies when clients gain employment is concerning, as is the six month time limit for achieving employment before the individual is exited from the service and is no longer eligible for intensive, wrap-around support in their search for work.

Not only does this approach incentivise moving as many people as quickly as possible into jobs, but it shifts the focus away from wellbeing, which may well be

compromised as people enter jobs in an employment environment of low wages, high competition and reduced rights and protections.

Another concern we should have is that, through the process of contracting out this potentially harmful ‘service’, people who experience mental health issues and the pressure to find employment first-hand, their friends, family and community, and opponents of the compulsory intensive support programme will direct their indignation toward those agencies providing employment services.

It is important that our opposition to this new intensive support initiative is directed at the State, rather than the agencies who, within the context of a volatile funding environment, have chosen to take on these contracts.

Also important is retaining an analysis of how the practise of pushing people who are amongst the least able to work into employment, without addressing the employment conditions that lead to their exclusion from the labour force, strengthens hegemonic ideas around

disability and ability to work as well as directly benefiting the capitalist class.

A further aspect of the benefit changes that has recently come to light, sparking criticism, has been related to new requirements of beneficiaries to undergo drug testing before entering work or training.

Previous concerns with this requirement focussed on the amount of public money that would be wasted on mass drug-testing that would yield few positive results, and thus would require far greater expenditure than the savings made by cutting benefits of those who tested positive.

However, newly released details show that the Ministry plan to pass the costs of drug tests on to those being forced to take them. The process for drug testing beneficiaries has been recently made public and outlines the following minimal requirements of Work and Income:

Work and Income will “provide them [beneficiaries] with a list of testing agencies in their area and the cost that the testing agency charges for a test,

Welfare attacks

confirm with the beneficiary which testing agency they choose, [and] offer assistance to the beneficiary to help meet the amount of taking the test and explain that this must be repaid from their benefit”.

This is a far different process from that originally outlined by the minister which would see the cost of drug tests falling on potential employers, with the cost only being reimbursed by WINZ and recovered from the person's benefit if they returned a positive test, and will obviously have a much greater negative impact on people's already tight finances and rightful sense of persecution.

In considering these changes, along with wider context of benefit restructuring and cuts, it is important to recognise the state as the institution pushing punitive and detrimental management of people in need of support, no matter how it tries to become invisible by delegating out its most contentious work.

Opposition to welfare reform needs to recognise that the oppressive and stigmatising treatment of people in need of support is tied in with the economic objective of welfare cuts – it is a purposeful, ideological aspect of the overall assault on working-class organisation and solidarity.

In challenging these changes, we need to be demanding both jobs for unemployed job-seekers, and for the right of people not performing paid work to receive adequate financial support in a way that respects their wellbeing and dignity.

See also

A radical mental health consumer's thoughts on the welfare reforms, Polly Peek
<http://fightback.org.nz/2012/10/18/a-radical-mental-health-consumers-thoughts-on-the-welfare-reforms/>

Defending the Domestic Purposes Benefit, Jessica Ward
<http://fightback.org.nz/2012/04/06/defending-the-domestic-purposes-benefit/>

Why you should get involved in Fightback

We support trade union activism

Because we believe that only the working class can create socialism, we are active in the basic organisations of the working class, the trade unions.

Currently, unions are generally dominated by middle-class bureaucrats who see themselves as peacemakers between workers and bosses. We work towards transforming unions into strong, democratic, fighting organisations, controlled by their members. Such unions will mobilise workers for struggle in the workplace

and society through strikes, workplace occupations and other forms of militant action. In an economic crisis they are more important than ever.

We join in the struggle to extend the union movement to the majority of workers who are not yet organised, especially the campaigns by Unite Union to involve youth and workers who have insecure conditions.

We stand with workers in struggle for better rights and conditions, and initiate discussion on revolutionary ideas through strike bulletins and electronic media.

We support student-worker solidarity

On campus and in schools, Workers Party members are actively trying to rebuild the radical student movement. We oppose fees, demand living grants for students, and fight for free speech.

We encourage students to link their

struggles with those of the working class. Workers ultimately pay most of the bill for education, even in a semi-private university system such as we have. Workers will be won to the idea of free education from kindergarten to university if they see students willing to support their struggles.

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Millennial generation: Casualisation and resistance

by Ian Anderson, *Fightback* (Wellington).

Middle-brow sections of the capitalist press have criticised 'millennials' in recent months, and millennials in turn have responded through blogs and other media. Also termed Generation Y, the 'millennial' generation broadly covers people born between 1980 and 2000 – "teenagers and twenty-somethings."

In May, Time Magazine ran a cover story describing millennials as the "Me Me Me generation." Author Joel Stein was quick to distinguish himself from previous generations of crotchety, anti-youth reactionaries through an appeal to science; "I am about to do what old people have done throughout history: call those younger than me lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow. But I have studies! I have statistics! I have quotes from respected academics! Unlike my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents, I have proof."

Stein cited statistics that 'millennials' have a higher rate of narcissism than previous generations. These statistics are disputed. However, some generational trends are harder to dispute; millennials are less likely to own property, more likely to live with their parents, more likely to be politically cynical than previous generations.

In liberal US paper *The Nation*, student Emily Crockett noted the most "glaring omission" from Stein's Time magazine rant; the declining economic conditions faced by millennials compared with their parents. In fact, Crockett noted that the closest Stein came to acknowledging "low-income youth" consisted of a mocking jab about "ghetto-fabulous lifestyles." More recently in Australian women's publication *Daily Life*, columnist Daniel Stacey argued that the casualisation of work in recent decades has forced

millennials to adapt their behaviour; "The fundamental error here is to mistake the adaptive behaviours of a new generation for the cause behind labour market changes." Stacey argued that much of this adaptive behaviour, particularly disloyalty to companies, is a form of individual resistance

Casualisation and polarisation of the workforce

Since the onset of neoliberalism, or 'Rogernomics' in Aotearoa/NZ, millennials have grown up in a casualised and brutally competitive work environment. By 1996, 49% of workers were in 'non-standard' employment, including part-time work, self-employment, long hours of 50 or more, casual and fixed term work, and holding multiple jobs.

The Department of Labour estimates that in 2006, around 34.79% of the waged workforce was working long hours of 50 or more, more than double the amount in 1996. Unemployment sits at around 6.5%, but this is a low estimate, discounting significant numbers of underemployed workers.

Recent studies estimate that if formal work hours were shared evenly across the populations of industrialised countries, each person could work around 21 hours in formal work. However, polarisation of the workforce, with a significant amount overemployed, and a significant amount underemployed, produces a competitive work environment that corrodes class solidarity.

In this polarised work environment, youth employees (those aged 15-24) have the highest rate of temporary employment. Youth unemployment has risen to 30.9%, the highest rate in over 30 years. In other words, millennials have borne the brunt of an increasingly flex-

ible labour market.

When older commentators complain of the cynicism, individualism and disloyalty of youth employees, they conveniently evade the conditions that produce this behaviour – enabled through attacks on working-class organisation by Baby Boomers such as Ronald Reagan in the USA, Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and Roger Douglas in Aotearoa/NZ.

Individual resistance

Marxist revolutionary Antonio Gramsci argued that the oppressed have a dual consciousness; an oppressed and oppressor consciousness. In this sense the crotchety reactionaries of Time magazine may have a point. The neoliberal era of capitalism, formed through the destruction of working-class collective power, can produce an individualist consciousness in working-class (and declassé) youth.

While disloyalty to the company, and its hollow 'team work' slogans, is a good start, it doesn't necessarily lead to solidarity. Casualisation is a zero-sum game; an individual pulling a sickie can easily be replaced. Pulling sickies can even erode solidarity, as the consequences start with other workers.

If everyone pulls a sickie on the same day, the game changes. Rebuilding class solidarity is about collective self-interest.

Collective resistance

The Council of Trade Unions (CTU) is the largest officially democratic organisation in Aotearoa/NZ. However, in this defensive period, it is largely disconnected from working-class youth. Since 1991's attacks, unions have largely retreated to the 'high ground' of the public sector and industrial bastions. Even these union bastions have increas-

Casualisation

ingly come under attack, as capitalists attempt to extend the neoliberal organisation of work to ports, meat processing and other core industries.

Although real wages for unionised workers have risen since the low point of 1991, real wages overall have declined. Less than 10% of the private sector is unionised, and any union recruiter will know that youth often don't know what unions are.

The official union movement acknowledges lack of youth participation as a problem. The concept of the 'precariat,' disproportionately young workers with precarious work conditions, has increasing currency. The Council of Trade Unions (CTU) holds biennial Stand Up youth conferences, and launched a project called Together which aims to support un-unionised workers – anecdotally estimated to have around 70 members.

These CTU strategies do not support direct mobilisation of youth to improve their own conditions. Political and legal strategies are needed, but without rank-

and-file mobilisation in workplaces and communities, this approach ultimately encourages passivity for the working-class majority. Passivity is death.

In 2005–2008, the Supersizemypay campaign, spearheaded by Unite Union and Radical Youth, showed what active working-class youth resistance can look like. Through both strikes and political campaigning, this movement defeated youth rates, (a victory since snatched away by the National government) and won a \$12 minimum wage.

In recent months, unionised workers in the USA and Aotearoa/NZ have taken on McDonald's, a bastion of casualisation and anti-unionism. Strikes among McDonald's workers from Detroit to South Auckland prove that working-class resistance is not dead. However, the official union movement largely does not prioritise this direct industrial organisation among working-class youth.

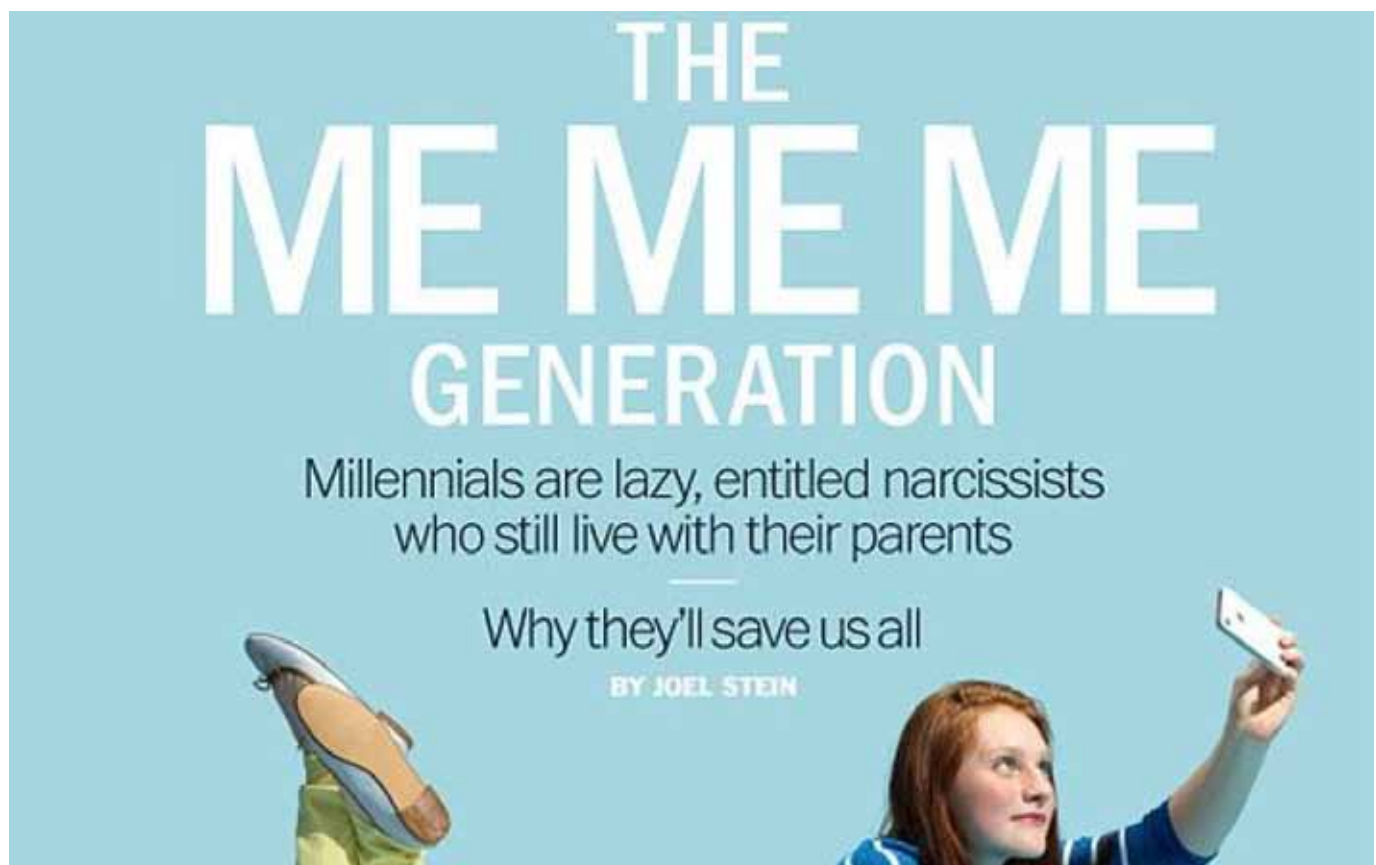
Only a movement that supports the mobilisation of casual, part-time, temporary, unpaid, unemployed, and under-

employed workers – disproportionately youth – can begin to grapple with the particular challenges of late capitalism.

Overcoming cynicism

In the lead-up to elections, the Electoral Commission often points out that 1 in 4 youth aren't registered to vote. However, overcoming political cynicism isn't just about bringing out the vote – youth are right to be cynical about the options currently on offer.

To offer any hope of transformation, of improved conditions for the millennial generation, workers and progressives must build strength on the ground; in neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools. We must offer visions of what those spaces could look like if they were arranged to meet social need, with an even distribution of work hours. We must develop a sustained opposition, both industrial and political, to this entire system – represented by successive Labour and National governments.



The recent Time magazine continues a bizarre obsession with the generation often referred to as Generation Y (broadly identified as those born between 1983–2004)